



## **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

### **DECISION RECORD**

#### **North Fork Highwood Creek Westslope Cutthroat Trout reintroduction**

**Proposed Action:** Sterile hatchery WCT would be stocked as necessary to develop and maintain a population for angling followed by stocking of local WCT for conservation purposes. The local WCT would be obtained from above the natural barrier on NFHC and from one or two of the following streams: North Fork Little Belt Creek, Big Coulee Creek, Smith Creek or Cottonwood Creek. The donor stream would be replicated, reducing the risk of extinction in the event of a catastrophic wildfire, disease, drought, or unforeseen hybridization with non-native fishes. A fishery would be quickly established that would increase recreation in about 1.5 miles of NFHC immediately above the constructed barrier.

**No Action:**

The 1 – 2 miles of NFHC immediately above the constructed fish barrier would remain fishless or nearly fishless for longer, likely several years. Under the no action alternative, WCT in Big Coulee Creek, North Fork Little Belt or Cottonwood Creek would not be replicated and any unique adaptations would not be preserved.

**Description of Public Notification/Review Process:** Environmental Assessment (EA) was placed on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web site on April 5, 2017. The comment period ended at 5PM on May 8, 2017. One comment in complete support of the project was received.

**Decision Notice:**

Based on the EA and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the EA is the appropriate level of analysis and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. By this Decision Notice, the unaltered Draft EA is hereby made the Final EA. The Final EA may be viewed on the MFWP's website or obtained upon request from the MFWP's Region 4 headquarters.

May 12, 2017

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Gary Bertellotti", is written over the printed name.

Gary Bertellotti  
Regional Supervisor